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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on research conducted in Scotland as part of a 2-year European Union project, Management for Organisational and Human Development (MOHD), through which seven research centers in five countries examined strategies for whole organizational development. Work within the Scottish network of MOHD focused on the understanding of contributions that individual employees can make to the development of the whole organization. Using action research methodology, ongoing change projects in Scotland were analyzed with particular questions of change investigated by interviewing members of the organizations and reviewing internal memos and reports. At Stranraer Academy, the focus of change was on management style and factors that created either resistance or support for implementing change in teaching styles and curricula. At Glasgow University, a retrospective analysis was made of the Teaching with Independent Learning Technologies project process. At Strathclyde University, the project reviewed was about policy development for Information Technology in initial teacher training. It was confirmed that key features of change agency include formal empowerment, roles and relationships, normative values and attitudes, and a sense of agency. Findings supported the importance in any change process of a common understanding of the intended change. (Contains 16 references.) (JLS)

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AGENCY IN ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

Michaela Thaler, University of Innsbruck and Bridget Somekh, Scottish Council for Research in Education, with contributions from Stephen Draper and Gordon Doughty, University of Glasgow.

This paper was presented to the MOHD project symposium: The Impact of Organizational and National Culture upon collaborative Change Initiatives in Educational Settings, at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association in Chicago, 25 March 1997.

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AGENCY IN ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

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The Text

The ideas and data used for this paper derive from the research project "Management for Organisational and Human Development" (MOHD) carried out from December 1994 to November 1996. This project was funded by the European Union within the "Human Capital and Mobility (HCM) Programme". The research was conducted within a network of seven research centres in five countries. Each centre carried out a number of small scale inter-linked research projects into strategies for whole organisational development which give high priority to the development of the organisation (its mission, its purpose and their expression through the ways in which the work is carried out), and to the consciousness of the employees and of the clients as to what the organisation and its human resources are for.

The work within the Scottish network of MOHD focused especially on the understanding of contributions which individual employees can make to the development of the whole organisation. Five organisations participated[1]. All conducted their own developmental work within the project. Two focused on developing or/and improving the use of Information Technology in teaching and learning, the others focused more generally on the improvement of teaching and learning through different strategies. All these intended changes concerned the structure of the organisation as well as changes at the level of individual behaviour, such as individual attitudes and teaching styles. The participants from the organisations who worked with the MOHD team based at the Scottish Council for Research in Education (SCRE) were people who were all important "contributors" to the development of their organisations, and although these participants did not have to come necessarily from the senior or middle management of the organisations most of them did.

The Sub-text

We have decided on a formal 'voice' for this paper but we would also like you to know something of the sub-text to our work together - that is, how the paper came to be written and why working on it was particularly formative in developing our thinking. We had both had considerable experience of action research before we began working together, but our experience was gained in different countries. I (Bridget) had worked as a teacher-researcher, facilitator of action research and course tutor on enquiry-based Masters degree courses in the UK. My understanding of action research had been gained in particular from leading the Pupil Autonomy in Learning with Microcomputers Project (PALM) which investigated whether or not information technology could be used by teachers to give students greater control over their own leaning and make a fundamental change to its quality. I (Michaela) first learned about Action Research when I was studying Business Education and Personnel management at the University of Innsbruck and was trained as a teacher in these subjects. This training was based on the Action Research methodology. Later, when I was working at this department at the University, we tried to further develop this Action Research approach within the initial teacher training programme.

I (Bridget) had become increasingly interested in exploring ways of using action research methods to promote change across a whole organisation, such as a school, university

[1] Organisations participating in the MOHD project in Scotland were: Craigmillar Primary School Edingurgh, Mary Glasgow and Stuart Melville Primary School Edinburgh, Stranraer Academy, The University of Glasgow TILT project and the University of Strathclyde Faculty of Education and Jordanhill.

department or small business. In leading the Initial Teacher Education and New Technology project (INTENT) I had been able to experiment with setting up development partnerships between senior managers (such as Deans) and IT co-ordinators in schools of education and I saw the MOHD project (Management of Organisational and Human Development), upon which this paper draws, as an opportunity to take this work forward. For me (Michaela) it was very new but also very interesting to apply action research to the management of change in organisations which, in this case, was mainly to gain understanding about the roles of people who want to introduce change in their own organisations.

In January 1996 we began working together when Michaela arrived in Edinburgh to take up the post of researcher with the MOHD project for six months. We learned a great deal from each other. We had different cultural experiences and, arising from these, some slightly different interpretations of action research methodology, in particular, what constituted the accepted style and content for an academic paper. We had also read different books. We learnt a lot from writing collaboratively because we frequently took each other by surprise in the ideas we came up with!

MOHD itself provided us with a context for our research which was quite different from anything either of us had experienced before. The Scottish project's only substantial resource was Michaela's six month appointment. There was also some funding for travel within Scotland, although the main travel funding was for three international meetings with our partners at the other five research centres in Spain, Italy, Austria and the UK. There was no money to fund any new work in any organisation working with MOHD in Scotland. Partnership was, therefore, based on a shared interest in the management of change, a belief by the various partners that it would be valuable to work together, and the benefits each participant saw in being linked to an international project. We came to see that this made a very fundamental difference to our relationships with each other. For example, there was never any suggestion that we at SCRE were facilitating the research and development work being carried out by other participants: instead, we were working with them as research partners with no constraints of accountability one to another.

Rather than us working with participants from the organisations to carry out joint research into organisational roles generally, the participants, as representatives of their organisations, attended regular workshops at SCRE involving in-depth discussions about their own roles. This methodological background will be described in the section below. Section three of the following formal text sets out some "key concepts" of change agency which appeared to be of significance in the participants' work. The final part of the paper integrates these key concepts of change agency into a broader understanding of organisational change. It includes two personal reflective accounts which demonstrate the explanatory power of metaphors for understanding the process and practice of change agency. These accounts are written by Gordon Doughty and Steve Draper. Both are working at the University of Glasgow and did not have any experience with action research before. Gordon Doughty has been the Director of the project "Teaching with Independent Learning Technologies" and Steve Draper has been the evaluator of this project. The aim of this project was to produce and to evaluate various types of computer assisted learning material to benefit teaching and learning across twenty different departments and services at the University. Both not only contribute to the paper, they also influenced our thinking about professional and organisational change: Gordon's main contribution to our thinking has been as an example of an unusually successful change agent, whose strategies have fascinated us and form whom we have wanted to learn. Steve's main contribution to our thinking has been as a creative thinker who has frequently challenged the group by questioning ideas generally accepted in the culture of teachers and teacher educators. He has provided the grit to unsettle our easy assumptions.

Methodology

The MOHD project was designed as an action research project. Across all seven centres participant-researchers from organisations carried out action-oriented research on their developmental work and its impact on the development and change of the organisational structure. In Scotland the focus was on investigating the impact of existing change initiatives in the participant organisations rather than setting up new projects. Collaboration with leading participants from the organisations enabled us to gain knowledge about the nature of change agency as experienced by those filling this role within their organisations. We were interested in finding out characteristics of change agency and comparing them to see if there was any commonality across organisations that were very different and came from different stages of the educational system. The two-monthly organised in-depth discussion workshops at SCRE proved to be a very efficient method of gaining deep and mutual understanding of change agency in the varying organisations. These discussions normally lasted about three to four hours and built upon each other: The first workshop dealt with the aims and purposes of the MOHD project and, following agreement on common ethical groundrules for collaboration, participants described the successes and difficulties of on-going development work in their organisations in some depth. This served to introduce the individual projects to the other participants and revealed that there was a pattern of externally and internally experienced conditions of change across all the participating organisations. Analysis of this first discussion showed clearly that, although the intended change was very different, with some intentions focused primarily on changing the structures whereas others aimed primarily to change behaviours such as attitudes and teaching styles, in practice change always concerns both aspects. It appeared that the commitment, involvement and development of the concerned staff - i.e. personal agency - is a central factor in changing organisations. Based on this analysis, at the second workshop we started to discuss individuals' "strategies" for dealing with the "problems" of implementing change (such as ways of motivating and inspiring staff). This discussion gave an interesting first insight into the amazing diversity and complexity of the roles filled by these key participants. Based on their individual interpretations of the opportunities and problems we could clearly see how action was always situationally adjusted. A major theme which emerged from this early work related to role conflicts experienced by change agents and the way in which these can be contained - and even transformed into creative tensions - if those in key positions understand the multiple nature of the self. There is a need to position the self strategically within every situation and in relation to every individual, and to do this within a clear ethical framework which clarifies the essentially moral nature of any form of management of people (see Somekh and Thaler, 1997, in press).

In our further work we therefore tried to develop our understanding of the self-assertion of these change agents, their ways, means and mechanisms of motivating and inspiring people in order to move change forward. In the third workshop in order to stimulate discussion about the nature of "change agency" we used a method for focusing upon metaphors. The participants were asked to find metaphors which best described their situation as a change agent within their organisation. We found the method very useful because it allowed the participants to name and to frame their situation in a "language" which was not preoccupied with a certain meaning and normally not used in their everyday routine at their workplaces. The ensuing discussion of the meaning of these metaphors helped us to connect the content of the metaphors with the "real" conditions in the organisational realities in which the participants were working. This discussion enabled the participants to reflect on their own role. This reflection built upon previously gained understandings about external and internal constraints and conditions of change and was recognised as a valuable experience by the participants. Additionally, some of them wrote about their metaphors and explained their meanings in the organisational setting. Two examples of these reflective accounts are included in the final section of this paper.

In addition to the workshops, all the organisations were visited to get insight in the real life settings of the projects and we worked more closely with three on a range of other enquiries

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over a period of time. Particular questions of change were investigated mainly by interviewing members of the organisations and documented in internal memos and reports for the organisation. At Stanraer Academy we focused upon management style and factors which created either resistance or support for implementing change in teaching styles and curricula (Thaler and Somekh, 1996). At both participating universities we tried to depict a more comprehensive picture of change. In the case of Glasgow University we worked with the project director on a retrospective analysis of action research features of the TILT project process which seemed to be successful in the change process of the organisation (Carson/Doughty/Thaler, 1996). And, in the case of the Faculty of Education at Strathclyde University, we wanted to find out more about the significance of developing a policy for Information Technology in initial teacher training - to what extent was this a catalyst for the change process of the organisation? (Thaler/Baker/Watterson 1996).

Some key features of change agency

We want now to discuss some key features of the nature of change agency in educational organisations which emerged from our study. This is not a comprehensive list. Other key features we would include if space allowed are: the importance of using resources as both a catalyst and a support for change; the need for change to be conceived as a cyclical rather than a static process; and the importance of developing a sense of ownership in all the participants.

Formal empowerment

Being named and given a responsibility enables individuals to adopt new roles and stimulate change. Change agents in our understanding are people who suggest and promote change in organisations. They are empowered by the institution which gives the change agent the possibilities, required resources and the power to engage in change. This empowerment can originate in the formal hierarchy if the change agent is a manager (like the head of the school in the case of Craigmillar Primary and Stanraer Academy) or if the function of the position held is mainly characterised as a change function (like the deputy head of Mary Erskine and Stewart's Melville Junior School who was responsible for personnel development or the evaluator of the TILT project whose function was to give feedback and thereby to initiate development). In the case of Glasgow University the director of the change project became a change agent, because he was able to get access to external resources provided by a UK-wide pr object, the "Teaching and Learning Technology Programme". The opportunity to participate in the programme, which had a very high prestige in the British academic community, empowered him and his team to introduce change in the University. Empowerment in the organisation was the pre-condition of introducing change. It enabled the change agents to use power and special knowledge (such as experts knowledge or formal and informal personal relationships to people inside and outside of the organisation) in order to promote change. In all our cases change agency was based on a combination of power and knowledge whereby the knowledge component very often was brought in by building up teams responsible for the change.

Roles and Relationships

People who are empowered and motivated to conduct change in educational organisations need to engage in many roles and relationships. The need to negotiate with managers who are professionals, as well as with administrators, teachers and students' representatives demands the change agent to act and react in very different ways. The metaphors the MOHD participants found for their work as change agents showed that these relationships were shaped individually. Some of our participants found many different metaphors for their roles in the change process of the organisations: Some of these metaphors described expected roles like being a "planner", "leader", "project manager". Other metaphors indicated much more unexpected and on the first sight irrational and immoral roles like being a "conjurer" or a "trickster". Others again described the excitement and the challenge

of changing the work place, such as being a ‚revolutionary" or an "adventurer". There were also metaphors which described the supporting and/or helping role of change agency (such as being a "mirror", a "supporter" or a "mediator"). This variety of metaphors describes the attempt to establish individual relationships which took account of the needs of other people who were concerned with the change process in any way. Others found one single metaphor, which indicated the need for enormous adaptability, for example: feeling like "water in its many different moods (calm, stormy, frozen) continually surrounding and ultimately changing a rock." Change cannot be forced by the change agent. Change happens not by initiating it but by those who are confronted by the demands changing themselves and their ways of working within the organisation.

This capability of adopting an appropriate role in response to the situational requirements was a very central feature of change agency as
discussed in our project. This ability was one of the most important pre-conditions to create contexts of change within the formal and informal structure of the organisations. Change agents use their different roles as "tools" in order to put change forward. Which role is used in a relationship depends on the interpretation of the situation and the relationship the change agent has previously established with the person concerned. For our participants the element of manipulation in their strategies for bringing about change were most of the time quite conscious but ethically not seen as problematical as long as the change agent could see a clear development of the core mission of the institution. This was also because they believed in the value of what they were trying to achieve, so they seldom felt that it was against the best interests of colleagues. Although the change agents adopted many roles they didn't feel their identity was threatened as long as only their "professional" identity was concerned. Problems only occurred when conflicts between the "professional" and the "personal" identity arose. The change agents felt for instance very uneasy when colleagues only saw the management role and not the person with his/her beliefs, values and attitudes behind the work they did. In one of his articles Peshkin (1988, 18-20) identified at least six different "I's" engaged in his work as a researcher. These "I's" as he describes them developed mostly from personal and professional experiences, some of them dating back to childhood experiences. Due to the situations in which he found himself as a researcher different "I's" seem to be strongly affecting his feelings and actions, some of them even in conflict with each other. In some situations for instance he felt the "ethnic maintenance I" which is based on his ethnic background was dominant and which stimulated feelings of valuing and belonging to an ethnic group. In other situations however he felt the existence of a contrasting "I" which valued cross ethnic interactions. Peshkin's example shows that identities consist of many relatively stable subjectivities. These strong "I's " determine the ways in which researchers - or managers or change agents - try to choose different ways to engage in relationships on the basis of their interpretation of which role might be most successful in order to achieved the desired ends.

Normative values and attitudes

Engagement in change agency is determined by an individual's basic normative values and attitudes There is no doubt that there can be various reasons for the special motivation of taking responsibility for change processes in organisations of which strong personal interests (such as career perspectives and/or the opportunity to gain power) are just examples which might not always be of great benefit for the organisation (Fullan/Stiegelbauer 1991, 20). To discuss whether the change intended be the change agents in our project were appropriate or not would go far beyond the aims of this paper. However it seems that they were all driven by very strong ideas an d beliefs about how the quality of teaching and learning organisations should be developed. These beliefs focused on the core missions of the organisations in which these people work. These change agents tried to take decisions about change and its implementation in the light of the views of those in the organisation who were most concerned. To enhance the quality of teaching and learning for pupils and students was the main reference point of the change activities. Other criteria such as costs and the needs of staff were judged in relation to this reference point. It

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was also very important to convince staff of this reference point so that they would accept and engage in change.

A strong belief that change is possible and a resilience to accept and to overcome criticism in a positive way can be seen as key attitudes of change agents. Although some of the metaphors described the change process as a very slow process, where the one who wants to introduce change has to be very patient (such as "moving the dinosaur with a feather duster" or "different moods of water changing a rock") in order to move the organisation just a little bit, they never felt that change was impossible. Many examples showed that the change agents were able to use formal and informal power structures either explicitly or implicitly. It was their strong belief that the use of power (such as using hierarchical power to enforce people to adopt change or the use of informal networks to put change forward) was sometimes necessary in order to achieve agreed goals. In these cases power was not seen as an oppressive and constraining means but as ,the capacity to achieve outcomes" (Giddens 1984, 274).

A Sense of Agency

The sense of being able to challenge and to change the organisation is exciting and motivating for individuals. Many of the metaphors and much of our discussions described the challenge and the excitement of trying to introduce change in one's own workplace. The expression of feeling like being an "adventurer" or a "sailing boat" sheds light on these feelings. But it is also important to experience that the organisation is moving forward. Positive feedback from colleagues is an important factor to encourage change agents to go on with their efforts and to keep "energy levels high".

Relating change agency and organisational change

Organisational change usually becomes necessary when people inside or outside the organisation responsible for the organisation experience a mismatch between organisational performance and processes and their perception about how the organisation should ideally be. There can be many reasons for this mismatch such as new technologies, decreased resources, insufficient efficiency etc. which can arise within or from outside the organisation. A common idea is that, in order to meet the changed demands, people within organisations who are usually members of the management decide on change policies in order to meet the experienced mismatches. The implementation of these policies in the organisation "for real" has to be done by individuals who are subordinate in the various levels of the line management structure and is often accompanied by staff development measures like training. This understanding seems to be based on the belief that adaptive and reactive mechanisms which work within top-down approaches are the means of creating organisations which have the potential to survive and develop. Nevertheless, the concept of the "learning organisation" has been the focus of much debate in recent years (see Argyris 1992, Fullan 1982 and Fullan/Stiegelbauer 1991, Pedler et al 1991, Senge 1990).

This can be seen as an indicator that previously developed understandings of organisational change and learning have been insufficient. At least two reasons seem to be responsible for this. Firstly, the success of change efforts is not always measurable. This is especially the case in relation to the quality of education where it is very difficult to find adequate criteria for measuring whether educational quality has been improved cot-effectively. Thus what educational quality means and therefore what educational change means depends on the interpretation of those who are engaged in it (Arnold 1994). Secondly, the process of implementing change is not a neutral one. How it appears in practice and its actual impact depends on how the individual implements the innovation in his/her own day to day activities. Organisational change is a process where the individual interprets change demands in the light of his/her prior experience and in relation to organisational constraints and opportunities. So, for example, introducing Information Technology in teaching, in

order to adapt to technological progress, does not necessarily mean that the organisation is learning. Some teachers might see information technology as an additional and optional means of teaching and learning rather than a tool to be integrated in their teaching practice. Others might, perhaps as a result of personal interest, integrate and develop Information Technology in their teaching or use it to find new ways of teaching and learning. At the same time, organisational constraints like limited accessibility of IT for the students might restrict teachers efforts to integrate IT in the students' learning activities. Some of the teachers might become involved because of new career opportunities provided through the implementation of new technology, etc.

Different interpretations by individuals can, according to Gergen, be traced back to the "indeterminacy of meaning" (1992, 216ff) in language. According to his understanding change happens discursively through language. For Gergen "languages of understanding are interlaced with what else we do; they are insinuated in our daily activities in such a way that without the languages the patterns of activity would be transformed or collapse" (op.cit. 222). What "introducing Information Technology into teaching" means, is therefore very different for each person concerned as language is not a neutral and rational means of discourse. According to Derrida's concept of "differance" (1974) the meaning of any word is derived from other words or phrases which are different from it. Introducing Information Technology has multiple meanings due to the interpretations of the individuals. We agree with Gergen on this but in applying these ideas to understand organisations and organisational change it is important not to underestimate the meaning of obviously given realities which are interpreted by individuals but need not necessarily be named by language (such as the conditions of the building in which the organisation works or the way in which information within the organisation is distributed). We think that - at the level of the individual - the concepts of interpretation and reflexivity are of central importance for the transfer of change in the daily activities within an organisation. Language is the most important system of symbols to be interpreted but there are other systems as well. Learning at the level of the individual happens through reflexive and interpretative interaction. Elsewhere we have argued that according to Mead's theory of interaction (and various other theories related to his theory) individuals act not only in response to the demands of others but act on and react to the significance which these demands have for them within the interaction and in relation to their personality (Somekh and Thaler 1996). As Blumer writes "Ordinarily, human beings respond to one another ... by interpreting one another's actions or remarks and then reacting on the basis of the interpretation. Responses, consequently, are not made directly to the stimulation, but follow rather upon interpretation" (Blumer 1946, 170).

How and to what extent teachers change their work, therefore, depends on how they interpret the intended change policies on the macro level in relation to their experiences of the organisation (its culture and its structure) and their relationships with colleagues. Several studies also show that the personality plays an important role in the pre-disposition of the individual towards considering and acting on change initiatives (see Fullan and Stiegelbauer, 1991, 77). Individual action, therefore, is neither independent from others nor can it be seen as isolated from the social situation within which it takes place. Individuals do not simply carry out what others want them to do. Demands are accepted or rejected through reflecting on the significance of the demands for the own situation. In times of rapid change, when individuals are forced to change, the significance of interpretation for "constructing" actions seem to be even more important: In relatively stable periods individuals have recourse to established patterns of behaviour in order to meet "personal" and "organisational" demands, whereas they will very quickly find that these patterns are not suitable in rapidly changing social situations. As Giddens writes "Transitions in individuals' lives have always demanded psychic reorganisation .. the altered self has to be explored and constructed as part of a reflexive process of connecting personal and social change" (1991, 32-33). According to this understanding, significant changes in organisations as well as any other social changes don't simply demand the individual to acquire some additional selected skills. Change rather requires individuals to re-position themselves within the organisation. This re-positioning is a very significant factor in

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change at the micro level and is part of a process by which individuals try to "present" themselves as unique within the organisation. This presentation of the self, on the one hand, tries to preserve as much as possible of individual personality and individual needs. On the other hand, the self (and those actions which represent the self within a social situation) corresponds to organisational demands which, of course, are mainly represented through other members of the organisation.

Instead of understanding change in organisations as a linear top-down approach we therefore comprehend that organisational learning takes place between the macro level of change (identification of change needs and formulation of a change policy) and the micro level of change (implementation of change) and that these processes are interwoven. Both are necessary in order to promote organisational learning: Without individual learning change policies are useless. On the other hand change on the macro level also provides opportunities for individual professional learning which can then enhance organisational learning. In our understanding organisational change is based on an interactive and interpretative process. This includes the generation of change ideas and change needs which are based on the interpretation of external and internal demands on the organisation to change and often result in the creation and formulation of institutional policies of change. But, in addition and of great importance, it is through mechanisms of interaction and interpretation that all the individuals involved in further stages of implementing policy make their "own" sense of change demands. It is, therefore, clear that change can be imposed from the top of an organisation only to a certain degree by the mechanisms of legitimate authority and control. Change initiatives also need to take account of the interpretation and understanding of change demands by the individual people within the organisation (Somekh and Thaler 1996).

Change agency in practice: exploring roles through metaphors

Those who have a role in leading and supporting change within organisations are successful only if they are able to balance the demands of policy against a large number of these responses, interpretations and interactions at the micro level. The participants in the MOHD project workshops were acknowledged key players in major change initiatives in their own organisations and, through an exploration of metaphors for their role in leading change, we were able to document some elements of this complex process. Their role included setting the tone for change by becoming significant others to their colleagues and thus modelling positive responses and interpretations. They interacted, interpreted and positioned themselves within the group while exercising leadership for the group. The technique of identifying and exploring metaphors allowed the MOHD participants to make explicit the implicit images they had of their professional roles. Metaphors allow the starting of a process of clarification without freezing conceptions in a definition. Whereas definitions exclude alternatives, metaphors develop through free associations and accumulations.

Two 'stories' about these metaphors will serve as examples of the power of this method for developing understanding of how individual agency functions in an organisation.

First, Stephen Draper's reflection on metaphors he chose for his own role in supporting changes in teaching and learning at Glasgow University:

Someone who wants to change an organisation they work in has to change the people in it. Typically they feel frustrated and unable to cause the change directly. They may feel the task is like trying to move a dinosaur with a feather duster, like herding cats, like nailing jelly to the wall: all images of how change is not something one person can just do.

In fact it is exactly the position a teacher is in with respect to a learner, particularly a teacher of some physical skill such as playing a violin: having a very clear idea of the desirable end point, a very clear idea of why it is a good goal, and no direct power to change the learner's mind.

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Actually these feelings of frustration are misplaced. Knowing the desired end point is only one aspect of carrying out change. The people who have to do it have to reconcile the new goal with all the practical constraints of their particular job. This is exactly analogous to how a learner cannot, or anyway should not, simply learn to repeat the teacher's words, but instead must construct a version of the new knowledge on the foundations of their own personal ideas and experience. This construction is hard work, and different for each learner. Similarly, a colleague who is required to carry out some change has to seek a way to reconcile that change with all the existing requirements of their job: requirements that are probably mostly unseen by the agent demanding change.

In fact many of these colleagues will just not change, will not find such a reconciliation, leading to frustration for the change advocate; but probably a few will. So my metaphor for change is that it is like pushing on an air bag which itself pushes against the mass of other people in the organisation. Most will seem not to move, but if the air bag is flexible enough then it will bulge into and through the gaps, finding the places where the resistance is least. These are the places where colleagues found it easiest to reconcile old requirements and constraints with the new goal. And this is a good thing: new methods should always first be applied to the special cases where the advantage is greatest, and colleagues "resistance" is in fact sensible in preventing premature adoption of new methods where they might not be immediately successful. As the first applications succeed, this changes the situation for the remainder and a few more may now find it possible to change too.

A more optimistic metaphor is that pressure to change is like water pressing on a dam made of sticks. It doesn't really matter how resistant many of the sticks are, the water just goes between them; and then this starts to drag on the sticks until they weaken; then some give way and the current gets more powerful, and moves still more sticks, and so on. What really matters is not that most resist at first, but whether there are any gaps, any initial changes.

Second, Gordon Doughty's reflection on metaphors he chose to describe his roles as director of the TILT project at Glasgow University.

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During the MOHD workshop on metaphors I wrote down whatever metaphors seemed to illustrate my various roles in the TILT project. Because I generated so many I also tried to group them as I was writing them down, and look for just a key few. But I could only do that by using theoretical taxonomies, like Lewin's, which didn't seem fruitful at the time, although it does seem helpful now in making sense of them all.

Some of the metaphors imply learning, and making changes of my aims and activities in life according to what becomes possible - opportunist, adventurer, Columbus, sailing boat, sailor, a river, the Amazon. As a weekend and holiday sailor, metaphors associated with going with the tide and wind felt right. I can learn, have some control, influence events, and often get somewhere desirable but am basically working in harmony with nature. In the context of TILT, I would associate "nature" with the flow of technological and societal changes that have enabled IT to be useful in Higher Education learning.

Another group of metaphors show that I want to share my vision of what changes could be made, and how life could be better - seer, enthusiast, storyteller, interpreter. Activist, revolutionary and mole imply a need for power or control over others - that I want to make other people change as well, even if they don't initially want to.

Having been sanctioned to make the TILT grant proposal, then later to direct the project, I needed to become a leader, planner, negotiator, gatekeeper, project manager, supporter, mirror, mediator and evaluator. Leading professionals, even if a manager, is like herding cats. I often felt that my actions were not always carried out openly, being like a conjuror, trickster, Loge or a double glazing salesman. I also felt that I wanted to be a change adopter - designer, software engineer - using IT in my own teaching, and also using that as an example for others.

Conclusions

The success of an innovation depends initially on how successful the change process is in creating a minimum common understanding of the aims and purposes of the intended change. All the participants are individuals and decide, in the light of their prior experience, on their own contribution to the proposed initiative. They judge the worth of changing themselves and their working practices through an interactive process with the other people involved, and in the light of their expectation of future advantages etc. Those who seek to lead change therefore need to offer "room to manoeuvre" within which individuals have opportunities to explore and to create their own change ideas. This is important not only in order to satisfy personal needs, but to ensure that the initiative has the best chance of being implemented effectively. Planned change always has its limits: Within complex organisations like universities and complex tasks like teaching it is not possible to foresee exactly which individual needs have to be met in order to conduct change successfully. Our work in MOHD suggests that change in educational organisations is most effective when an individual or small group takes strategic action to reconcile the visions of policy-makers and teachers, and promote an initiative in a way that is sensitive to a range of on-going organisational experience (e.g. practical, professional, psychological). The metaphors the MOHD participants chose to describe their own experience as change agents have enabled us to present an analysis which goes some way to describing this important and complex role.

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